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Thousands of Houston families who need help paying their rent will get a chance to be added to list for housing assistance

With critical shortage of affordable homes, wait list for housing vouchers will open for one week starting Sept. 19

No long lines to apply with application at www.GetOnTheHHAList.com

HOUSTON – As an unprecedented number of families struggle to make their rent in a city with a critical shortage of affordable homes, more than 30,000 Houstonians in need will get an opportunity for housing assistance after the Houston Housing Authority (HHA) opens up the Housing Choice Voucher Program wait list on September 19, 2016 for the first time in four years.

The HHA will open the wait list for the Housing Choice Voucher Program (formerly known as Section 8) for one week from Monday, Sept. 19, through Sunday, Sept. 25, 2016. HHA officials expect as many as 85,000 Houston families, senior citizens, people with disabilities and others in need to sign up online for a lottery from which 30,000 names will be added to the wait list for housing assistance.

Houston has a critical shortage of affordable housing. More than 400,000 families in the Greater Houston area are estimated to be eligible for the Voucher program, but there is only space to add 30,000 more on the wait list.

“With limited availability of affordable housing in the Houston area, too many families are facing a crisis – making very hard choices every day between paying rent and other necessities. By opening the wait list and helping those currently in the program transition out of assistance, we can provide an opportunity for thousands of Houston families to find an affordable home,” said HHA President and CEO Tory Gunsolley.

Everyone who applies during the open period will have an equal chance at the waiting list, whether they are the first or last person to apply. Applications will be completed and submitted through www.GetOnTheHHAList.com.

The applications are being made available entirely online in English, Spanish, Mandarin and Vietnamese. The application process will be open 24 hours a day from 8 a.m. Monday, Sept. 19 through 11:59 p.m. Sunday, Sept. 25, 2016. The online submission will allow families to apply at a time and place convenient for them, regardless of their work schedules, and eliminate the need to stand in long lines in the summer heat.



Paper applications are not available or accepted at any HHA property or office, but residents can apply online from most smartphones. The online form will collect information, including each family members' social security numbers, birth dates, and income. A phone number and email will also be required for the applicant. Applicants with questions can call the Houston Housing Authority at 713-260-0500 Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Under the Housing Choice Voucher Program, a participating family finds a suitable home of their choice, which may include their current residence, if the owner agrees to rent in accordance with program criteria including standards of health and safety. A portion of the rent is paid to the landlord on behalf of the participating family, and the family pays the difference.

The income thresholds will be determined at the time that applicants are accepted for assistance, but the current guidelines set the annual income limits for assistance from the Housing Choice Voucher Program at \$24,250 for an individual and \$34,600 for a family of four.

The Houston Housing Authority will conduct a computer-generated lottery on September 29, 2016 and will notify the randomly selected applicants that they are being placed on the wait list for the Housing Choice Voucher program. Eligible families drawn from the lottery may be provided housing vouchers as early as the end of this year. HHA expects to go through the wait list within five years.

Housing Authority officials have worked to spread the word throughout the community about the opening of the wait list. The Housing Authority is advertising with local media and the METRO bus system is distributing flyers and other materials to community organizations and individuals throughout the area, making announcements through social media and working with area school districts to tell families about the opportunity.

"There are too many people who need assistance and are not familiar with the housing choice program or don't know they are eligible." Gunsolley said. "We are pulling out all the stops to get the word out."

Community centers and libraries around the city are coordinating with the Housing Authority to help make sure people have access to computers if they do not have internet access at home.

ABOUT THE HOUSTON HOUSING AUTHORITY:

The Houston Housing Authority provides affordable homes and services to more than 60,000 low-income Houstonians, including over 17,000 families housed through the Housing Choice Voucher Program and another 5,500 living in 25 public housing and tax credit developments around the city. HHA also administers the nation's third largest voucher program exclusively serving homeless veterans. More information about the Houston Housing Authority can be found at www.housingforhouston.com.

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